

recoup eviction

Authority may look at homes in Irish town following **Echo** probe

in Rathkeale. He will usually go there for Christmas."

In Rathkeale, because so many people share the same names, certain family branches are given nicknames to help identify them in conversation.

John Sheridan, who lives on benefits in the UK, is part of a family known as the "Porkey" Sheridans whose roots in Rathkeale go back several years.

In 1976 a descendant also called John "Porkey" Sheridan applied for planning permission to Limerick County Council for a gated house in Fair Hill, Rathkeale.

Rathkeale is the spiritual home of the community at Dale Farm known as the Sheridan Clan. Our probe discovered about 100 boarded up and empty homes in the town were owned by travellers, with several more in the process of being

built. These included an estate of 44 large homes being built by wealthy entrepreneur traveller Richard "Kerry" O'Brien, an uncle of Dale Farm spokesman Richard Sheridan, 42, John Sheridan's brother-in-law.

Most families return to them for the festive season or for weddings and funerals.

Sources in Rathkeale said the "Porkey Sheridan" property is close to a mansion owned by Richard "Kerry" O'Brien.

The Echo tried to contact John Sheridan through Richard Sheridan, who previously said no one would return to Rathkeale after the eviction, and other Dale Farm traveller representatives, but he was unavailable for comment.

Richard Sheridan said: "I don't know anything about this."

Inquiry hears of residents' fears for primary school

SCORES of residents have said a "new Dale Farm" on their doorstep would lead to traffic problems, place a burden on the local school and devalue homes.

A public hearing is being held over plans for a 12-pitch caravan site at Church Road, Laidon.

There are fears Laidon Park Primary School, which is opposite the proposed site, could face similar problems to Crays Hill Primary School, which saw most settled children removed following an influx of pupils from the illegal Dale Farm site in 2004.

Travellers want the 12-pitches as new homes for the most vulnerable occupants evicted from Dale Farm, in Crays Hill, last month.

They have withdrawn a bid for a further 50 temporary pitches on the land, which is owned the Homes and Communities Agency.

The council refused a planning application before the eviction, prompting the appeal to the Planning Inspectorate being considered at the inquiry.

Scores of residents wrote letters of objection to the proposals.

Paul Martin, from Royal Oak Chase,

Laidon, said: "We are all too familiar with recent news of Dale Farm whereby over the last ten years the residents have flaunted planning laws and illegally extended what was an originally agreed site.

"I have concerns, as do many, that this development could turn into another Dale Farm, or even larger if you take into account the size of the surrounding land.

"People are obviously concerned this will devalue their homes."

There were also fears the development would destroy the habitat of protected reptiles and amphibians which live on the land.

However, Stuart Hardwicke-Carruthers, representing the families, pointed out the council had previously agreed planning permission for a sports stadium on the same site which was never built.

He argued the site would only take up a portion of the land and wildlife could thrive on the rest of it.

He added: "This would open up the value of the land as open space. It is private with no public access."

The inquiry ends today. A decision could take several weeks.